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### **Regents Award Biotechnology, Neurobiotechnology Initiative Funds**

BATON ROUGE - The Louisiana Board of Regents has awarded funding to 17 proposals under the Governor's Biotechnology and Neurobiotechnology Initiative programs, approved during the 2002 Legislative Session. The programs are designed to enhance existing biotechnology and neurobiotechnology programs which have the greatest potential to spur economic development in Louisiana.

Forty-one Biotechnology Initiative proposals were submitted for consideration, and 16 were chosen for funding. The awards will fund projects statewide across a wide spectrum of disciplines. Funded proposals include plans to enhance hazardous substance research, study nutritional and genetic causes of obesity, implement a graduate training and collaborative research program in agricultural biotechnology (in partnership with the USDA and Southern Regional Research Laboratory), and even strengthen the state's equine industry through specialized medical research.

A total of more than \$8.5 million was awarded in two categories: recurring (\$2,730,000) and capital outlay or non-recurring (\$5,785,000). A complete list of the approved Biotechnology Initiative proposals, including individual funding amounts, is attached.

The Board of Regents approved one Neurobiotechnology Initiative proposal, which will establish a trans-university alliance for neurobiotechnology in Louisiana. Multiple projects are proposed at the LSU Health Sciences Centers in Shreveport and New Orleans and at the Tulane University Health Science Center. The projects will focus on three primary areas: 1) the mechanics of pain and inflammation, 2) age-related macular degeneration, and 3) synaptic lipidomics and neuroprotection in the setting of traumatic head injury, Alzheimer's disease and stroke.

"Both the Biotechnology and Neurobiotechnology Initiatives are important steps in enhancing

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Louisiana's health sciences resources and in invigorating our economy through  
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research and the potential marketability of discoveries,” said Commissioner of Higher Education Joe Savoie. “Making these funds available for these worthy projects is further confirmation that our governor and our legislature understand the economic return of investment in higher education.”

The Governor's Biotechnology Initiative was created to provide targeted resources in this growing research area and enhance the state's economic development potential. The separate Neurobiotechnology Initiative was created to provide resources for similar purposes at the LSU Health Sciences Center Campuses. Both programs were funded during the 2002 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature for distribution by the Board of Regents on a competitive basis. Proposals were judged according to their relative potential to enhance economic development through attracting federal funding and/or the market potential of research results. Each proposal underwent a peer-review process using out-of-state experts.

In other board action, Regent members approved the 2002-2003 operating budgets for Louisiana public postsecondary education, awarded \$1,475,000 in growth funds to community colleges and approved the 2003-2004 capital outlay budget requests.